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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 002115

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2021
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: TURBULENT POLITICAL SCENE CONTINUES AS PM
KACZYNSKI BLASTS OPPONENTS

REF: WARSAW 2063

Classified By: Political Counselor Mary T. Curtin for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Poland's seemingly endless political turbulence continues to follow twists and turns that lead to constant speculation and disagreement about whether there will be early elections, whether Law and Justice (PiS) can form a new majority, and whether the opposition can cobble together enough votes to bring down the government--a difficult task under Poland's constitution. The possibility, reported reftel, that PiS would seek early elections after ejecting the populist Self Defense (SO) party from the coalition was dashed when a scandal erupted over televised secretly taped conversations in which PiS insiders were

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caught wooing SO deputy Renata Beger with promises of senior government positions and hints of financial assistance if she were to desert SO leader Andrzej Lepper. Opposition parties cried foul, drawing comparisons to earlier political scandals and questioning PiS's commitment to clean up corruption. Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski's poorly received September 27 address, in which he cried opposition provocation, furthered weakened PiS's position, making it almost certain PiS will not seek early elections. This latest domestic political crisis is gripping and theatrical, but, we believe, will not directly impact GOP thinking on key foreign policy issues, including Polish engagement in Afghanistan, Iraq or Lebanon (reported septel), even if the constant roiling does not help Poland's image. End Summary.

Jaroslaw Kaczynski Out on a Limb

12. (C) After provoking the latest domestic political crisis

by firing his Minister of Agriculture, SO leader and junior coalition partner, Andrzej Lepper, PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski found himself buffeted by an unfolding political crisis involving charges of corruption and influence peddling by his party. Kaczynski's plan for building a new majority government hinged heavily on enticing leading SO members to desert. Kaczynski insider Adam Lipinski was taped secretly by SO deputy Renata Beger, in conversations in which the PiS official held out the promise of a senior government position and questionable loans if Beger jumped parties. Beger released the tapes on September 27, leading the opposition to cry foul and call for the government's resignation. Beger herself has considerable political baggage, with charges pending that she secured her place on the 2001 election lists with forged signatures. In the released tapes, Lipinski also floats the idea that the GOP might try to resolve her long-standing legal troubles, and could use parliamentary funds to provide a bridge loan to Beger and other SO deputies who abandoned Lepper for PiS, to enable them to reimburse the campaign funds SO spent on their elections.

13. (C) Revelations that PiS, elected on an agenda of expunging corruption from Polish politics, was engaged in its very own dubious political dealings left Kaczynski scrambling. In a poorly received televised speech September 27, Kaczynski lashed out at the opposition for "political provocation," labeling "the left, post-communists and liberals" as scoundrels bent on destroying PiS's efforts to build the "Fourth Republic." Kaczynski sought to reassure Poles that the government was "functioning normally," and that Poland was enjoying "its best year since 1900." He hinted at nefarious conspiracy by promising that a forthcoming report on the overhaul of the military intelligence service (WSI) would clarify the crisis, hinting that SO in cahoots with hard-line WSI insiders had provoked the trouble. He also claimed that changing the head of the National Bank of Poland (whose term expires next month, in November) would also fix the current political atmosphere. But Kaczynski's speech was a flop. Negative opinion polls after the speech mean it is almost certain PiS will not call for early elections. And, with SO deputies largely rallying to Lepper, PiS efforts to form a new governing coalition with the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) foundered, making a newly-cobbled PiS-led majority harder to envision.

14. (C) The opposition, meanwhile, is having a field day, comparing "Begergate" to earlier political crises involving influence peddling that bogged down the previous Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) government. Both Civic Platform (PO) and the SLD have submitted motions for dissolving Parliament, and have called for an extraordinary session of the Sejm to vote on the proposals. Sejm Marshall Marek Jurek, after briefly suggesting that an early session was possible, said any such motions would be considered when Parliament holds its next session on October 10. Presuming that SO votes with the opposition, the dissolution motions will carry a majority but not the required two-thirds to bring down the government, and so would fail.

Possible Vote of Confidence

15. (C) PiS thus contemplates riding out this crisis, running a minority government with the League of Polish Families (LPR), and possibly calling early elections in spring 2007 if the electoral tides are more favorable. LPR, polling well below the parliamentary threshold of five percent, has no interest in rocking the boat. If the dissolution measures pass, but fall short of the required two-thirds majority (as expected), PO may present a motion of no confidence in the government. That motion, if passed by simple majority, opens the door to possible new political constellations. The possible king maker, remarkably, is PSL's Waldemar Pawlak, whose small group of 25 deputies could make the difference in forming a new majority government, be it led by PiS or PO. Pawlak's price would be steep, including the premiership itself, according to press speculation. PO Deputy Pawel Spiewak told poloff on

September 27 that "it was time" for PO's leadership to provide a "sensible alternative," namely some kind of grand coalition with PO, PSL and SO or SLD, and thus move past the circus atmosphere that describes the current domestic political atmosphere. Thus far, however, we have not seen evidence that the PO leadership is ready for such a move.

Comment

¶6. (C) Comment: After Deputy PM and Minister of Finance Zita Gilowska was whisked out of office in June following allegations of her collaboration with the Communist-era security services, Poles across the political spectrum credited PiS for not tolerating even the whiff of political impropriety. The image of PiS engaged in "business as usual" could hurt with some of its core constituents. But the fractiousness of the opposition means they are also not in a position to capitalize seriously on the latest uproar, and so this unsettled situation could continue. Through it all, however, we have seen no hint, as we will report septel, that the Kaczynski's domestic tempest will influence Polish external policies, notably military deployments in Afghanistan, Iraq or Lebanon. We expect this roiling to continue, and expect it to be distracting, but expect also the President and Prime Minister, and leaders of the larger opposition group (PO) to remain firm on significant commitments. End Summary.

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